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ABSTRACT

This paper consists of two art curriculum units: (1) mural painting; and (2) sculpture. In the mural painting unit, students analyze and critique works done by Diego Rivera and create a mural using the fresco technique. In the sculpture unit, students create a piece of sculpture that combines influences of past and/or present-day Mexican sculpture with those created by someone of their heritages. (EH)

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Children and Youth in Mexico Toward the 21st Century.

Kenwood High School

Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar
Mexico 1994

FULBRIGHT-HAYS SUMMER SEMINAR
CURRICULUM PROJECT

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN MEXICO TOWARD THE 21st CENTURY

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Baltimore, Maryland
1994

INTRODUCTION

I would like to thank the U.S. Department of Education and the US Mexico Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange for providing me the opportunity to participate in the 1994 Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad Program entitled "Children and Youth in Mexico Toward the 21st Century." It was a vigorous, but yet exhilarating, program. My knowledge about Mexico, and the Mexican culture has increased tremendously.

During the trip, the sixteen participants stayed in eleven different hotels, a dormitory, and monastery camp. We visited many cities via airplane, bus, and train. We had numerous lectures on a wide range of topics and experienced many cultural activities. The most enjoyable activities for me were visiting art Museums, Zocolos, Toros (Bullfight), schools, archeological sights, cathedrals, the Ballet Folklorico, and of course, shopping.

While traveling extensively in a group, it became very important for us to look out for each other, which caused a type of family bonding to occur. I would be remiss if I did not mention Dr. Linda Goff, the director of the program and Carmen Hernandez, our Mexican guide who became our mentor.

This paper consist of two art curriculum units; Mural Painting and Sculpture. The information gathered while I was in Mexico will be shared with students who are in the International Baccalaureate Program at Kenwood High School, the school where I have been recently appointed assistant principal and with art educators from all over the world at the National Art Education Association Convention in Huston, Texas during the Spring of 1995.

LESSON: MURAL PAINTING

OBJECTIVE

Students will demonstrate an understanding of murals by critiquing works done by Diego Rivera and creating a mural using the fresco technique.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Mexico, political and social turmoil was so powerful until it motivated many artist to create bold paintings expressing their reactions. The early twentieth century in Mexico was a time when the poor tried to make a better life for themselves. They increased their efforts to become free of corrupt landlords who treated them no better then feudal serfs. In 1911 this struggle reached a bloody climax with the fall of the dictator, Porfirio Diaz, and the start of the Mexican Revolution. The revolt ended in 1921.

The emergence of Mexican mural paintings became a renewed form of artistic expression following the Mexican Revolution. The subject of these murals depicted political and social problems experienced by the people of Mexico. Past Mexican civilizations painted murals inside and outside of pyramids, the artists of this period selected many government buildings on which to paint their murals.

Diego Rivera was one of the most famous Mexican muralist. He was born on December 8, 1886 in the state of Guanajuato which is located in central Mexico. Both of his parents were school teachers. Rivera's father encouraged the development of his artistic talent by setting up a studio for him before he could

he had even learned to read. By the time he was 20 years old, he had studied with several of Mexico's master painters. He received a government scholarship to study art in Spain, where he was greatly influenced by Pablo Picasso. From Spain, he went to paris, where he lived for several years. While in Europe, Rivera saw many 15th century Italian murals.

In 1929 Rivera married an artist named Frida Kahlo. Because of martial problems, they divorced in 1939 and remarried the following year. Rivera and Kahlo were part of a circle of artists, writers, and political activists that helped to shape Mexican culture and politics in the 1930's and 1940's. Diego created a new Mexican art that drew upon native people and traditions. In 1957 he died of a heart attack in his studio which is located in San Angel, Mexico. He willed his art to the country of Mexico.

A mural is a large picture that is painted directly on a wall or ceiling. The fresco technique is used when creating a mural. Fresco is a painting in which pigment, a fine ground powder that gives paint its color, is applied to a wall spread with wet plaster. The fresh plaster is applied to a small area at a time, and water based pigments are painted quickly on the wet plaster. The paint bonds with the plaster, and when the plaster dries, the painting is part of the wall. In a fresco, the plaster is the binder (the liquid that holds the grains of pigment together) and no solvent is used to thin the binder.

STRATEGIES

1. Gather references about murals painted by Diego Rivera. You may use sources listed in this paper's Bibliography.

2. Students will view and critique murals painted by Diego Rivera.

3. Students will decide upon a wall on which to paint their mural, get permission from the proper school authorities, plan and create a mural based upon a theme such as listed below:

    *Our community, our state, or our world
    *Scenes of activities that have taken place within our school
    *Historical or present issues
    *Our multicultural society

4. A multidisciplinary approach may be used in order to teach this lesson. The Social Studies teacher and art teacher may collaborate.

5. Using cooperative learning strategies, students will create a mural. Students should draw upon past art experiences when creating this mural. They should use the Elements of Art: line, shape/form, space, color, and visual texture. The Principals of Design which are movement, balance, proportion, variety, emphasis, and unity should be considered.

6. Students should create a practice drawing in color. Students will then enlarge the drawing in scale and create a mural using the fresco technique.

MATERIALS

1. Books, slides, prints, and any references found about murals painted by Diego Rivera. You may select murals from the proceeding list in order to study and critique:

Murals painted in the National Palace of Mexico

Class Struggle

The Legend of Quetzalcoal

The Eagle on the Cactus

The Conquest of Tenochtitlan

Colonial Period

Independence of Mexico

American Invasion

Laws of Reform

The French Invasion

The Mexican Revolution

Murals painted in the Detroit Institute of Arts, U.S.A.

Detroit Industry's North and South Walls, 1932-33

2. Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, rulers, etc.

3. Color medium for practice drawing such as Color pencils or tempera paints.

4. Large paper for "cartoon" which is a full-size preliminary sketch of the picture to be copied in a fresco.

5. One of your school's walls, either inside or outside.

6. Wet plaster, paint brushes, cloths, newspapers, paints, and tools for applying the wet plaster onto the wall.

EVALUATION

1. Evaluate each phase of this project.

2. Ask questions that require student's to use critical thinking skills.

*Compare the American and Mexican Revolutions.

*What technique is used to create a mural and how is that technique different/similar to the technique used to create a painting on canvas?

*Locate a mural painted in a building, analyze the mural, and compare it to one painted by Diego Rivera.

*Explain how you used the Elements of Art and Principles of Design.

*What benefits were gained by planning and creating the mural in a group instead of individually?

*What theme did you choose, why did you select that theme, and what made the theme appropriate for a mural?

*Was the project a success? What criteria did you use in order to determine your response? If you decided to paint another mural, what would you do differently and why?

*How did critiquing murals by Diego Rivera help in the creation of your mural?

*Why is this considered as being a multicultural lesson? Why is it important to have multicultural lessons? What makes this lesson multidisciplinary?

LESSON: SCULPTURE

OBJECTIVE

Students will demonstrate an understanding of sculpture by creating a piece that combines influences of past and/or present day Mexican sculpture with those created by someone of their heritages.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sculpture is a work of art that is made to occupy space. It is three-dimensional which means that it has height, width, and depth. Sculpture may be in-the-round or freestanding. This means that it is surrounded on all sides by space and every side shows something that the other views do not. Sculpture is relief when it is carved from, or attached to, a flat surface. Relief sculpture is to be viewed from the front only.

Carving, casting, modeling, and/or assembling are techniques used to create sculpture. When an artist carves, he cuts or chips into a block of hard material. In casting, the sculptor pours melted-down metal into a mold that will later harden. In modeling, an artist shapes a soft material such as clay. When a sculptor assembles or constructs, he/she joins pieces of material together. All of these techniques of creating sculpture have been used by Mexican artists from past civilizations to modern day cultures.

Mexico's pre-Hispanic cultures go back as far as 4000 B.C. and lasted until the Spanish Conqueror Hernan Cortéz arrived in 1519. The earliest pre-Hispanic people were the Olmec who lived on the coast of southern Mexico from about 1200-400 B.C. They developed a sculptural style of giant, simplified, stylized figures decorated with images from the surrounding rain forest such as jaguars, alligators, and toads. Also, they are known for large stone human heads, with animated facial expressions, oriental eyes, with Negroid lips and noses. On these heads are carved helmets similar to those used in the North American sport of football.

The next great Mexican civilization was that of the Maya. They lived in southern Mexico and Central America from 250 to 900 A.D. The Maya people decorated their sculptures with relief serpents, jaguars walking one behind the other, eagles devouring hearts, and skulls carved in relief. They also carved large sculpture-in-the-round figures of reclining idols called Chacmools. These figures were somewhat geometrically stylized.

After the Maya, the Aztec flourished in Mexico. They appeared in the mid-1300's. By the time that cortez arrived, The Aztec empire covered all of southern Mexico. They built huge temples, invented the calendar, carved monumental sculptures, and created unique stylized masks and ornaments.

Although sculpture is created by many Mexicans today, one area in the valley of Oaxaca in southern Mexico, home of the Zapotec people is where it has reached a different level. Many Zapotec farmers are distinguished woodcarvers and create sculptures that are considered a source of folkloric inspiration. To create these carvings, the artist uses a machete to rough out the overall shape of the animal from a piece of copal wood. Delicate details are carved and then painted with a vibrant palette of paints that decorate the animals with imaginative and whimsical designs.

STRATEGIES

1. Each student will decide upon the theme of the piece of sculpture that he/she will create. The sculpture must combine influences of past and/or present Mexican sculpture with those created by someone of his/her heritage.

   Suggested themes

   People, animals, vegetation, the elements such as wind, rain, and other forces of nature.

2. Students will decide upon the sculptural process (carving, casting, modeling, or assembly) that he/she will use. After making that decision, each student will do research on the selected sculptural process and on sculptures done by his/her ancestors. Students will make several practice sketches of original pieces of sculpture. After critiquing the sketches with classmates and the teacher, students will select the best sketch and draw the sculpture from all views. If the piece of sculpture is in-the-round, the student must sketch the sculpture from the following views: Front, right side, back, left side, and top. If the sculpture is relief, it should be drawn from the front view only.

3. Gather all materials needed· this includes the tools as well as the material out of which the piece of sculpture will be made. Discuss all decisions with your teacher.

4. Create the piece of sculpture and critique it using the following questions:

* How did you combine influences of past and present day Mexican sculpture with one done by someone of your ancestry? How did you integrate the two different cultures so that the final result was of a unified piece of sculpture? Describe parts of the sculpture showing Mexican influences and those of you heritage.

* What role does sculpture play in Mexico, what role did it play to your ancestors, and what role does it play in your present society?

* What sculptural process (technique) did you use, and what would have happened if you were to have used a different process and material?

* Explain the differences between a piece of sculpture and a painting?

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